FINAL DAYS OF THE SEASON



© © International Polar Foundation

The 2022-23 season is drawing to a close. The BELARE team had been very busy with the final tasks before their scheduled departure at the end of this week.

Last Saturday a team of five left PEA for the coast again. Three collected the remaining supplies that the team couldn't take back during the previous traverse. Meanwhile, two others re-oriented the automatic weather station at the coast to improve its ability to communicate with the other weather installations in the PEACE project transect from the Antarctic Plateau to the Princess Ragnhild Coast.

In the meantime, improvements to the hangar at Perseus Intercontinental Runway are finishing up. With new bedrooms, a kitchen, toilets, and a mobile container solar power unit, Perseus has been transformed into a comfortable place to spend the night for teams heading to and from the coast.

The team of five that had gone to the coast stopped at Perseus on the way back to help the three team members already at Perseus finalize the work there for the season and prepare the shutdown of the hangar.

Preparing the Princess for hibernation

At the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica, the remaining eight team members have been hard at work finishing up their tasks for the season and preparing the station to overwinter.

Systems Engineer Aymar de Lichtervelde and plumber Bernard Polet have been leading a team installing as much of the new water treatment system in the station as possible while shutting down the current water treatment unit for the end of the season. Installation work of the new system will continue at the start of next season.

Johan De Muylder has finished installing a new array of solar panels on the north side of the ridge where the station sits. Additional solar power is always welcome at the world's first zero-emission polar research station. Meanwhile, the solar panels on the walls of the station need to be protected during the winter, so the team has been covering them up with protective wooden panels that the carpenters redesigned this season.

And IPF Chief Technical Officer Johnny Gaelens has nearly finished preparing all the scientific instruments at the station for overwintering for those that will stay or for repatriation for those that will go back to their home institution or university. Johnny has taken one instrument from the EPFL in Lausanne, Switzerland that had been measuring snow particle size on the Antarctic Plateau and installed it next to PEA so the engineering team can check the design and improve the system.

Ready to Go

With the team at Perseus back at the station since Tuesday evening, all 16 who are left in this year's BELARE team are now finishing closing up the Princess as they await news of when the plane will arrive to take them home.